DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 568 CE 074 001

AUTHOR	Padak, Nancy; Rasinski, Tim
TITLE	Family Literacy Programs: Who Benefits?
INSTITUTION	Kent State Univ., OH. Ohio Literacy Resource Center.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. for Literacy, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Apr 97
NOTE	7p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; Academic Persistence; Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Educational Attitudes; *Family Literacy; Family Programs; *Literacy Education; Literature Reviews; *Outcomes of Education; Program Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

The concept of family literacy is firmly rooted in a substantial research base from several disciplines: adult literacy, emergent literacy, child development, and systems analysis. Research from these disciplines was reviewed to determine the benefits of family literacy. The results show that family literacy programs do work and that at least four groups benefit: children, parents, families as units, and the larger society. Highlights of these benefits include the following: (1) children attend school more regularly and are more likely to complete their education; (2) children's general knowledge, oral language development, reading achievement, decoding ability, comprehension, writing, mathematics and science achievement, social skills, self-esteem, and attitudes toward school improve, and they are healthier; (3) parents are far more likely to persist in family literacy programs than in other types of adult literacy programs; (4) parents' attitudes about education and their reading, writing, mathematics, science, and parenting knowledge improve; (6) parents enhance their employment status or job satisfaction; (7) families learn to value education, become more involved in schools (leading to higher achievement for children), become emotionally closer, and read more; and (8) society benefits because parents' persistence in literacy programs helps to break cycles of economic disadvantage, joblessness, and welfare dependency. (Contains 67 references) (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 407 568

Family Literacy Programs: Who Benefits?

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Nancy Padak
Tim Rasinski
Ohio Literacy Resource Center
Kent State University

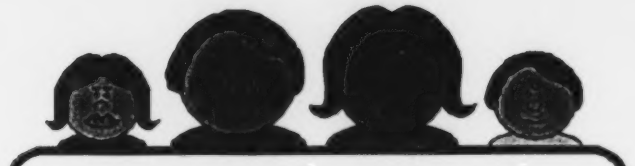
April, 1997

Designing and delivering literacy programs that benefit both parents (or other family members) and children makes sense. But do family literacy programs really work? And if so, who benefits? School administrators, community leaders, and funding agents want to know the answers to these questions before deciding to support family literacy programs.

The concept of family literacy is firmly rooted in a substantial research base from several disciplines, including adult literacy, emergent literacy, child development, and systems analysis. We reviewed research from each of these disciplines to find research-based answers to questions about the benefits of family literacy. The results are summarized below. In brief, the results show that family literacy programs do work and that at least four groups benefit: children, parents, families as units, and the larger society. [Note: The numbers following statements refer to the research studies listed in the bibliography. This is an update and revision of our 3/94 document by the same name.]

CE 074 001

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



CHILDREN BENEFIT FROM FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS

- Children's achievement in school improves (1, 5, 14, 16, 26, 27, 29, 31, 50, 58, 59, 60, 65). One review of 53 studies showed, beyond dispute, that student achievement results from increased parent involvement in education (26).
- Children attend school more regularly and are more likely to complete their educations (14, 36, 45, 46, 50). This has been a persistent finding for more than 30 years.
- Children's general knowledge, including that measured by intelligence tests, improves (5, 27, 37, 50, 56). One major research review found that the learning environment in the home accounts for more than half the variance in children's IQ scores (37).
- Children's oral language development accelerates (9, 50, 57, 59, 63). Reading aloud to children is the single most effective parent practice for enhancing language and literacy development (23).
- Children's overall reading achievement improves (15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 27, 28, 32, 45, 47, 54, 62, 63). One study of more than 38,000 children found that those who reported home environments that fostered reading had higher reading achievement (20).
- Children's reading vocabulary improves (9, 56, 63). Even Start children, for example, gain at double the expected rate on a standardized vocabulary measure (56).
- Children's decoding ability improves (22, 39, 50). They become more able to recognize unknown words in print.
- Children's comprehension improves (22, 39, 50). These separate factors–vocabulary, decoding, and comprehension–combine to support overall achievement in reading.
- Children's writing improves (17, 24, 61, 63).
- Children's math (17, 45) and science (48) achievement improve. Gains in these 3 areas–writing, math, and science–are particularly impressive because so few family literacy programs address these subjects.
- Children's social skills, self-esteem, and attitudes toward school improve (4, 32, 35, 45, 66). All these have the potential to support children throughout their lives.
- Children are healthier (21, 35, 52). Aside from its general importance, good health is related to higher achievement in school.

PARENTS BENEFIT FROM FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS

- Parents are far more likely to persist in family literacy programs than in other types of adult literacy programs. Those who persist have more opportunity to learn (2, 3, 23, 25, 35, 40, 41, 43, 44, 49, 50, 64, 67).
- Parents' attitudes about education improve; the value they perceive in education increases (2, 18, 44, 56, 60).
- Parents' reading achievement increases (17, 23, 41, 49, 66, 67). This finding, which is one of the most persistent in the research, also applies to English as a Second Language (ESL) parents.
- Parents' writing ability improves (17, 23, 50). More research needs to be conducted in this area, but preliminary results are very promising.

PARENTS (continued)

- Parents' math (17, 50) and science (48) knowledge increases. This is especially true when family literacy programs include focus on these areas.
- Parents' knowledge about parenting options and child development increases (23, 50, 67). For example, parents in one project became more confident about their abilities to foster their children's positive development (67).
- Parents enhance their employment status or job satisfaction (6, 35, 44, 50, 55, 56). Several large-scale studies, including the national Even Start evaluation, have shown this to be the case.

FAMILIES BENEFIT FROM FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS

- Families learn to value education (4, 29, 35, 42, 44, 50, 51). This finding has emerged from studies of children, parents, and families.
- Families become more involved in schools (15, 18, 26, 45, 50, 51). Family involvement in schools leads to better achievement for children (26).
- Families become emotionally closer (4, 23, 35, 38, 48). Family literacy activities bring parents and children closer together.
- Families read more and engage in more literate behaviors at home (30, 35, 40, 48, 50, 64).

SOCIETY BENEFITS FROM FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS

- Parents persist in family literacy programs, and persistence leads to literacy achievement, which in turn can break cycles of economic disadvantage. In particular, family literacy programs positively affect (or have the potential to affect) several major social problems:

  - Nutrition and health problems (16, 21, 38, 60).
  - Low school achievement and high school drop out rates (6, 23, 44).
  - Teen parenting (6, 33, 44).
  - Joblessness and welfare dependency (6, 16, 44, 50, 55).
  - Social alienation (1, 51).

Family literacy programs do work, and their benefits are widespread and significant. The existing body of research points to the enormous potential of high quality family literacy programs to influence the lives of parents and children positively through family support and education.

This work was supported by a grant from the Ohio Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education, contract no. 062976-FV-SO-97.

THE OHIO LITERACY RESOURCE CENTER IS LOCATED AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
414 WHITE HALL, P.O. BOX 5190, KENT, OH 44242-0001
1-800-765-2897 OR 330-672-2007 E-MAIL ADDRESS: OLRC@LITERACY.KENT.EDU

REFERENCES

1. Anderson, J.E. (1994). *Families learning together in Colorado: A report on family literacy.* Denver: Colorado State Department of Education, Office of Adult Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 395 015)

2. Baird, I. (1991, October). *How some low income women view learning as they prepare for the workforce: A comparative case study.* Paper presented at the meeting of the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education, Montreal. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 348 532)

3. Balmuth, M. (1986). *Essential characteristics of adult literacy programs: A review and analysis of the research.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 273 823)

4. Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Multifaceted impact of self-efficacy beliefs on academic functioning. *Child Development, 67,* 1206-1222.

5. Benjamin, L.A. (1993). *Parents' literacy and their children's success in school. Recent research, promising practices, and research implications.* Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 363 441)

6. Berlin, G., & Sum, A, (1988). *Toward a more perfect union: Basic skills, poor families, and our economic future.* New York: Ford Foundation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 297 037)

7. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1974). *Is early intervention effective? A report on longitudinal evaluations of preschool programs.* Washington, DC: US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

8. Carlin, C. (Ed.). (1995, May). *Literacy Practitioner. Family literacy issue.* Buffalo, NY: Literacy Volunteers of America.

9. Chall, J., & Snow, C. (1982). *Families and literacy: The contributions of out-of-school experiences to children's acquisition of literacy.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 234 345)

10. Chandler, J., et al. (1983). *Parents as teachers: Observations of low-income parents and children in a homework-like task.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 231 812)

11. Chomsky, C. (1972). Stages in language development and reading exposure. *Harvard Educational Review, 42,* 1-33.

12. Clark, R. (1983). *Family life and school achievement: Why poor black children succeed or fail.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

13. Cochran, M., & Henderson, C. (1986). *Family matters: Evaluation of the parental empowerment program.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 262 862)

14. Coleman, J. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity.* Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

15. Corno, L. (1980). Individual and class level effects of parent-assisted instruction in classroom memory support strategies. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 72,* 278-292.

16. (Undated). *Creating an upward spiral of success.* Louisville, KY: National Center for Family Literacy.

17. Darling, S., & Hayes, A. (1989). *Breaking the cycle of illiteracy: The Kenan family literacy model program.* Louisville, KY: National Center for Family Literacy.

18. Duff, R., & Adams, M. (1981). Parents and teachers: Partners in improving reading skills. *The Clearinghouse, 54,* 207-209.

19. Durkin, D. (1966). *Children who read early.* New York: Teachers College Press.

20. Foertsch, M. (1992). *Reading in and out of school: Factors influencing the literacy achievement of American students in grades 4, 8, and 12 in 1988 and 1990.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 341 976)

21. Goodson, B., Swartz, J., & Milsap, M. (1990). *Working with families: Promising programs for disadvantaged parents to support their children's learning.* Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates.

22. Greer, E., & Mason, J. (1988), *Effects of home literacy on children's recall* (Tech. Rep. No. 420). Urbana, IL: Center for the Study of Reading, University of Illinois.

23. Handel, R., & Goldsmith, E. (1988). Intergenerational literacy: A community college program. *Journal of Reading, 32,* 250-256.

24. Heath S. (1980). The functions and uses of literacy. *Journal of Communication, 30,* 123-133.

25. Heathington, B., Boser, J., & Satter, T. (1984). Characteristics of adult beginning readers who persisted in a volunteer tutoring program. *Lifelong Learning,* 7, 20-28.

26. Henderson, A. (1988). Parents are a school's best friend. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 70, 148-153.

27. Henderson, A., & Berla, N. (Eds.). (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement.* Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 375 968)

28. Hewison, J., & Tizard, J. (1980). Parental involvement and reading attainment. *The British Journal of Educational Psychology, 50,* 209-215.

29. Kirsch, I., & Jungeblut, A. (1986). *Literacy: Profiles of America's young adults.* Princeton, NJ: National Assessment of Educational Progress.

30. Krol-Sinclair, B. (1996). Connecting home and school literacies: Immigrant parents with limited formal education as classroom storybook readers. In D. Leu, C. Kinzer, & K. Hinchman (Eds.), *Literacies for the 21st century: Research and practice* (pp. 270-283). Chicago: National Reading Conference.

31. Laosa, L. (1978). Maternal teaching strategies in Chicano families of varied educational and socioeconomic levels. *Child Development, 49,* 1129-1135.

32. Lengyel, J., & Baghban, M. (1980). *The effects of a family reading program and SSR on reading achievement and attitude.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 211 925)

33. Lewis, A. (1992). *Helping young urban parents educate themselves and their children.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 355 314)

34. Lightfoot, S. (1978). *Worlds apart. Relationships between families and schools.* New York: Basic Books.

35. Litzen, L., & Wanderschneider, M. (1994). *Washington state Even Start 1993-94: Final evaluation, A report to the Office of Adult Literacy.* Olympia, WA: Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 378 411)

36. Mansbach, S. (1993). *A series of solutions and strategies: Family literacy's approach to dropout prevention,* Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 358 284)

37. Marjoribanks, K. (1972). Environment, social class, and mental abilities. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 63,* 103-109.

38. Mitchell, A,. Weiss, H., & Schultz, T. (1993). *Evaluating educational reform: A review of research on early childhood education, family support and parent education, and collaboration.* Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

39. Mundre, L., & McCormick, S. (1989). Effects of meaning-focused cues on underachieving readers' context use, self-corrections, and literal comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly, 24,* 89-113.

40. Neuman, S. (1995). *Families reading together: Adult education students and their preschool children.* Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania State Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 395 106)

41. Nickse, R. (1989). *The noises of literacy: An overview of intergenerational and family literacy programs.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 308 415)

42. Nickse, R. (1990a). *Family and intergenerational literacy programs.* Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education.

43. Nickse, R. (1990b). Family literacy programs: Ideas for action. *Adult Learning,* 1(5), 9-13, 28-29.

44. Nickse, R., Speicher, A., & Buchek, P. (1988). An intergenerational adult literacy project: A family intervention/prevention model. *Journal of Reading, 31,* 634-642.

45. Nurss, J., Mosenthal, P., & Hinchman, K. (1992). *Blalock FIRST: A collaborative project between Georgia State University and the Atlanta Public Schools, Final report.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 355 408)

46. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (1992). *Newsletter.* Washington, DC: USDE/OERI.

47. O'Rourke, W. (1979). Are parents an influence on adolescent reading habits? *Journal of Reading, 22,* 340-343.

48. Ostlund, K., Gennaro, E., & Dobbert, M. (1985). A naturalistic study of children and their parents in family learning courses in science. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 22,* 723-741.

49. Paratore, J. (1993). An intergenerational approach to literacy: Effects on the literacy learning of adults and on the practice of family literacy. In D. Leu & C. Kinzer (Eds.), *Examining central issues in literacy research, theory, and practice* (pp. 83-92). Chicago: National Reading Conference.

50. (1996). *The power of family literacy.* Louisville, KY: National Center for Family Literacy.

51. Popp, R. (1991). *Past and present educational experiences of parents who enrolled in Kenan Trust Family Literacy programs.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 340 874)

52. Schorr, L., & Schorr, D. (1988). *Within our reach: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage.* New York: Doubleday.

53. Sinclair, R. (1980). *A two-way street: Home-school cooperation in curriculum decision making.* Boston: Institute for Responsive Education.

54. Smith, C. (1971). *The effect of environment on learning to read.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

55. Solorzano, R. (1989). *Analysis of learner progress from the second learning cycle of the CALPEP field test: A report to the California state libraries.* Pasadena, CA: Educational Testing Service.

56. St. Pierre, R., Swartz, J., Murray, S., & Deck, D. (1993, March). *Highlights: National evaluation of the Even Start family literacy program. Preview of the third interim report.* Paper presented at the National Even Start Evaluation Conference, Washington, DC.

57. Sticht, T. (1983). *Literacy and human resources development at work: Investing in the education of adults to improve the educability of children.* HumPRO-PP-2-83. Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization.

58. Sticht, T., & Armstrong, W. (1994). *Adult literacy in the United States: A compendium of quantitative data and interpretive results.* Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 371 241)

59. Sticht, T., & McDonald, B. (1989). *Making the nation smarter: The intergenerational transfer of cognitive ability.* San Diego, CA: Applied Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences, Inc.

60. Swick, K., et al. (1993). *Evaluation of Target 2000 parent education program. Final report.* Columbia, SC: South Carolina University, College of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 365 412)

61. Taylor, D. (1983). *Family literacy: Young children learning to read and write.* Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

62. Teale, W. (1978). Positive environments for learning to read: What studies of early readers tell us. *Language Arts, 55,* 922-932.

63. Teale, W., & Sulzby, E. (1986). *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

64. Tracey, D. (1995). Family literacy: Overview and synthesis of an ERIC search. In K. Hinchman, D. Leu, & C. Kinzer (Eds.), *Perspectives on literacy research and practice* (pp. 280-288). Chicago: National Reading Conference.

65. Van Fossen, S., & Sticht, T. (1991). *Teach the mother and reach the child.* Washington, DC: Wider Opportunities for Women.

66. Yu, J. (1994). *Family literacy for parents with limited English proficiency.* Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania State Department of Education Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 379 960)

67. Zakaluk, B. (1991). *Book bridges: Its first phase. An evaluation.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 337 646)

Ohio Literacy Resource Center

414 WHITE HALL
KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
PO BOX 5190
KENT OH 44242-0001

Enhancing adult literacy in the State of Ohio

441461

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Kent, Ohio 44240
Permit No. 2